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LINGUISTIC METHODOLOGY AND THE TEACHING OF HINDI.

BY- APTE, MAHADEO L.

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THE IDEAL SITUATION IN THE TEACHING OF HINDI TO AMERICAN STUDENTS SHOULD BE SUCH THAT--(1) THE TEACHER OF HINDI IS AWARE OF ALL THE LIKELY PROBLEMS ENGLISH SPEAKERS MAY FACE IN LEARNING HINDI, (2) THE TEACHER HAS DEVISED WAYS OF OVERCOMING THESE PROBLEMS, (3) HE HAS A HINDI TEXT WHICH IS ORGANIZED AND BASED ON THE RESULTS OF A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF HINDI AND ENGLISH AND A FREQUENCY ANALYSIS OF HINDI, IS GRADED IN TERMS OF DEGREES OF COMPLEXITY STARTING FROM THE SIMPLE STRUCTURES AND GOING ON TO MORE DIFFICULT ONES, AND IS FULL OF RELEVANT CULTURAL CONTENTS. THE AUTHOR POINTS OUT SOME PHONOLOGICAL AND SYNTACTICAL PROBLEMS WHICH AMERICANS LEARNING HINDI HAVE TO OVERCOME. HE ALSO EMPHASIZES THE NEED FOR AWARENESS OF THE DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE STUDENT'S OWN CULTURE AND THAT OF THE LANGUAGE WHICH HE IS LEARNING. (AMM)

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Mahadeo L. Apte
Duke University

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Linguistic Methodology and Teaching of Hindi

Teaching or learning a foreign language is not a novelty to human beings. All great civilizations and human societies have been doing it for centuries. The development of the discipline of Linguistics during the last four decades has, however, given a new impetus to the study of language and has broadened the horizon of human beings in their outlook towards language which is their handiest tool for communication and the basis of all social interaction. It is not surprising then that this development should have its effect on language teaching methods. Within linguistics, there has developed a special field called 'applied linguistics', so called because it involves the application of linguistic methodology to various other disciplines, chief among which, is the technique of language teaching. Before discussing what is involved in such an application of linguistic methodology to language teaching, other significant results of the development of linguistics on language teaching may briefly be mentioned. The first is the awareness that a foreign language can be taught for different purposes, namely, for speaking, reading and writing or comprehension, or all three. Depending on the ultimate goal of the teacher and the learner, different techniques can be applied, keeping in mind at the same time that all these areas must and do overlap. In the past, generally only one technique of teaching a foreign language was used, no matter what the ultimate goal was. The students' first introduction to a foreign language was through its writing system. The recent emphasis, perhaps a little exaggerated, on the 'spoken' language, is to emphasize the fact that 'spoken' language is independent ~~from~~ of its writing system if there is one ~~and exists as such regardless of the existence of a writing system~~. The second major effect of the development of linguistics is the awareness of the fact that teaching the students their native language ~~was~~ is quite different from teaching them a foreign language. In the past these two areas were rarely if ever, separated and the methods used in one were just as readily applied to the other. This is probably the reason why the foreign language teaching was done through writing systems. A student learning his

native language already has the mastery of it in terms of communication. By the time a child reaches the age of 5 or 6, he has fully mastered the structured patterns of his native language and can use it to communicate with other members of his community. In essence then, what he learns is the representation of his native language in a different medium, namely writing, and the correlation of these two; that is, the 'spoken' language and its representation in writing. In the case of the student learning a foreign language, he has no previous knowledge of, let alone any mastery in that language. Therefore, methods employed in teaching a native language cannot be used to teach a foreign language. Obviously these are two different areas and different methods need to be employed.

Within the field of applied linguistics, there has developed the concept of 'contrastive analysis'. Putting it simply, this means that for teaching any foreign language there should be available, descriptions of the structures of the two languages involved; the native language of the students which let us call L1, and the language to be taught, the goal language, or L2. Such descriptions then can be compared to find areas of similarities and areas of differences. This, it is assumed, will help the teacher to predict and describe patterns which will cause difficulties and those which won't. Such a comparison may also indicate the possible areas of interference of L1 in learning L2 and areas where the students may carry over the patterns of L1 to L2. The approach then would be to start from the similarities and move on to the differences between L1 and L2, simultaneously using adequate language material to avoid the predictable difficulties. Such an approach suggests that the way in which L2 should be taught and the type of language material to be prepared would depend on the structure of L1.

What is involved in a structural comparison between L1 and L2? Four major aspects of the structures are relevant. 1) Phonologies, or the sound systems of the two languages; 2) the grammatical structures; 3) Lexicon or vocabulary; and

4) the cultures of the two linguistic communities. We may add comparison of the writing systems also. Depending on the ultimate goal of the students, certain aspects of such a comparison may be emphasized.

In addition to such a contrastive analysis, frequency analyses of L2 based on a very large sample would be essential, especially with reference to vocabulary and grammatical patterns. The idea here is that we try to use in the preparation of language teaching material sentence patterns and words which are most frequent in L2 in the beginning lessons. These patterns and words are often repeated in the subsequent lessons and new patterns and words slightly less frequent are added. The primary difficulty here is that very often such frequency analyses of languages are not available. Secondly, contrastive analysis may show that what is most frequent in L2 may not necessarily be more 'similar' in structure to that of L1. Presuming that such frequency analyses are available for foreign languages, the procedure to follow both in teaching and in preparing language material would be to find out from among the most frequent patterns and words those that are structurally similar to L1 and introduce them first; gradually increasing the degree of complexity and/or difference among the most frequent structures. Applying the same principle, we can then move on to less frequent structures. It is clear, that using the above approach means that the language materials and teaching techniques for L2 would change according to the L1 of the students. To mention a specific example, the language teaching material for teaching of Hindi to students who are native speakers of any other North Indian language would be quite different from that used for teaching Hindi to native speakers of English, since the degree of similarity between L1 and L2 with regard to all aspects of structure would be much higher in the first situation than in the second. Even in the second situation, slight changes may be necessary in the language material and teaching methods depending on whether the students are speakers of American English, British English or Australian English. Here the changes would be mostly with regard to the sound system.

In addition to what has been mentioned above, many other factors are relevant in the teaching ~~of~~ a foreign language. Some of these are a) age, background, intelligence, and motivation of the students; b) size of the class; c) number of contact hours between the teacher and the students; d) the ultimate goal of the students in learning L2; e) laboratory assistance in terms of audio-visual aid; f) attitude of the language teacher, whether literature oriented or linguistics orientated, and so forth. If L2 has many regional and/or social dialects this raises the question as to which form of L2 should be taught. With regard to teaching vocabulary it would depend on the ultimate goal of the students. Time does not permit us to go into all these factors. Instead, let us turn to our specific case, namely, the teaching of Hindi to students who are native speakers of American English. In dealing with this situation, we shall start with the comparison of the sound systems of the two languages and shall cover some other structural aspects that are relevant to this discussion. The aim here is to predict the probable areas where students will make mistakes and where interference from English is likely to be high. This, it is hoped, will help to develop better teaching techniques and to prepare appropriate language materials.

Phonology: One of the most important contributions of modern linguistics is the recognition that each language has a unique sound system regardless of its representation in a writing system, if any. Such a sound system consists of significant sound units called phonemes, which keep the utterances apart ~~in that language~~. Such phonemes may have different environmental phonetic realizations. Such phonetic variations of phonemes are called allophones. These allophonic variations are, however, insignificant from the native speaker's point of view. By the time speakers of a language are about 15 to 20 years old, they are so set in the speech habits involving the phonemes of their native language, that unless they are consciously made aware they fail to hear the nonsignificant phonetic variations of

various phonemes within the sound system. However, each language being a separate entity with its own sound system, learning L2 means acquiring new speech habits. In terms of perception, identification, and articulation of sounds, these new speech habits may involve any of the following situations:

1) Learning phonemes in L2 for which there are no phonetically similar sounds in L1. For example the whole series of what are called dental and retroflex stop consonants in Hindi (t, th, d, dh and ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh) as in 'tara,' 'thali,' 'dam,' 'dhire,' ṭopi , 'ṭhik,' 'ḍəbba,' 'pəḍho,') are, in this sense, new sounds to English speakers. Not only are they new sounds, but they are phonemes and, therefore, have to be learned. Here the teacher simply has to give a demonstration of these sounds by way of a diagram, and an actual articulation ~~of these sounds~~ and has to prepare drills involving these phonemes until the students have mastered them. The dental sounds are articulated with the tip of the tongue behind the lower teeth and the blade touching behind the upper teeth. As for the retroflex sounds, they are articulated with the tongue curled way back in the mouth and the underpart of the tongue tip touching the hard palate.

2) Two phonemes may be phonetically similar in L1 and L2; but their combinations may occur only in L2. The sounds bh, jh and gh as in 'bhat' 'jhəgḍa,' 'ghoḍa' in Hindi are examples of this. Here the individual sounds b, j, g and h as in ‘cab’, ‘judge’, ‘big’ and ‘hat’ are part of English phonology. However, their combinations do not occur in English. One way to train the students to pronounce these is to find combinations of two words where the first sound occurs at the end of the first word and the second at the beginning of the second word and then to ask the students to pronounce the two words as if they are one word. For example 'Bob Hope.' 'judge Hall' and 'big hat' when pronounced in this fashion may come close to the sounds 'bh' 'jh' and 'gh' in Hindi. The more difficult part would be to train the students so that they can pronounce them in word initial position and word final positinn.

3) Significant distinctions in sounds in L2 which are not significant in L1. In Hindi the distinction between voiceless unaspirated consonants like p, t, ṭ, c̆, and k and voiceless aspirated consonants like ph, th, ṭh, c̆h, and kh is significant since there are many pairs of words which are separated only by this difference, e.g., 'pu:l/phu:l,' 'tap/thap,' 'kana/khana', etc. Similar distinction for some of these sounds does exist in English except that it is not significant and the speakers are not aware of it. For example the sound 'p' occurring word initially as in 'pot' is strongly pronounced, or has slight aspiration; but when pronounced after another consonant 's', as in 'spare' it does not have aspiration. To native speakers of English 'p' in 'pot' and 'p' in 'spare' are the same since this distinction is not a significant one. As seen above, it is ~~however~~ significant in Hindi. The students can be trained to pronounce the aspirated consonants 'ph' and 'kh' by telling them to pronounce 'p' in 'pot' and 'k' in 'cot' with more force. In the case of unaspirated consonants 'p' and 'k', they should be asked to get ready to pronounce words like 'spare' and 'scare' and to drop the 's's just before saying the words. The second stage here would be to train the students to make this distinction in all environments.

4) Significant distinctions in L1 which are not significant in L2. In English there are two consonants 'w' and 'v' as in 'wail' and 'veil' which have phonemic status. In Hindi however, there is only one phoneme which is phonetically similar to these two. ~~This~~ The distinction between 'w' and 'v' is not significant in Hindi. An English speaker is likely to notice that a Hindi speaker may occasionally use a sound nearer to 'w' and other times a sound nearer to 'v'. The students therefore will have to learn to ignore this distinction as it exists in English. Described above are some of the situations where errors are predictable. It is quite possible that linguistically trained teachers of Hindi may come across other areas of Hindi phonology where similar problems arise.

Grammar: A comparison of the grammatical structures of Hindi and English involves, among other things, a comparison of word formation, the number of grammatical categories, the various processes of indicating these categories, ways of showing relationships among words within sentences and considerations of word order, concord etc. There are some similarities in the structures of these two languages; a) both have words which can be conveniently labeled as nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs and have similar functions; b) there are common grammatical categories such as number and person, tense and mood, etc. However, there are many grammatical features which are unique to each of these languages. The students are likely to carry over such unique features of English in learning Hindi thus causing interference. Similarly they may have difficulty in learning features which are unique to Hindi. The following are a few examples where such problems may arise.

1) The ~~usual and the~~ most frequent word order in Hindi is that of subject, verb or subject, object and verb as against the order of subject, verb and object in English. Since both have the same word order as regards intransitive verbs, namely subject and verb, the students may carry over the other pattern of English into Hindi.

2) A more serious problem is the way relationship of words within a sentence is indicated in Hindi. In English this is done by the use of prepositions, e.g., 'sit <u>on</u> the table,' 'food <u>in</u> the pot,' 'talking <u>to</u> a person', etc. In Hindi such a relationship is shown by words occurring <u>after</u> the word whose relationship with other words they are indicating. To put it simply, the function of the words called prepositions in English is performed by postpositions in Hindi. Examples: English 'sit on the chair,' Hindi /kursi par baithiye/ 'chair on sit;' English 'go with John,' Hindi /Jan ke sath jaiye/ 'John, with, go'; English 'Tiger in the ~~cage~~ house,' Hindi /ghar mẽ bagh/ 'cage house tiger', etc. This is one area where students often have trouble. One way to help them ~~correct such errors~~ is to emphasize ~~the fact~~ that there are one or two instances in English where such relationship is shown in the same manner as it is shown in Hindi. For example 'Mary'<u>s</u> hat', 'uni-

versity's progress', etc. It should then be emphasized that this is the only pattern students have to follow all the time in Hindi.

3) Another problem which causes difficulties is that of grammatical gender. In Hindi even inanimate nouns must belong to either masculine or feminine gender. Knowing the grammatical gender of all nouns is essential because the verbs and some adjectives take different endings depending on the gender of nouns. In other words gender has an important function in the formation of sentences in Hindi. Although this is a major problem, there is no easy way out. Some general rules for the determination of gender of nouns can be given. These rules are based on the endings of words and their meanings. However, there are many exceptions. Another way of remembering the gender of nouns is to learn them with an adjective where the form of the adjective indicates the gender of the noun, for example 'acchi kitab' feminine, 'accha ghar' masculine, ~~etc.~~

4) Learning second person pronouns and their proper use in Hindi is another problem area. In English the second person pronoun 'you' is used both in the singular and plural. There is no way of indicating degrees of respect for the listener by using different second person plural pronouns except such phrases as 'your honour' or 'your ~~highness~~ lordship', etc. In Hindi on the other hand, there are three second person pronouns, one in the singular and two in the plural. Using one plural form or the other is dependent on the social context, namely the social status of the speaker, and the listener, time and place, etc. In addition such allocation of status involves relationship between the speaker and the listener, age difference, caste and class difference, etc. Here, ~~then~~ the students not only have to learn the forms, but they also have to be familiar with the various situations in which they may use one form or the other, which means they have to be familiar with the cultural patterns of behavior among Hindi speakers.

5) Concord is another area in which students have difficulties. In Hindi there is an agreement between adjectives and nouns for number and gender and agreement

between verbs and nouns for number gender, and person. Since English lack such agreement between adjectives and nouns and has only a very limited concord between nouns and verbs, there is no need in English to learn paradigms of verbs with different endings for gender, number and person in addition to suffixation for different tenses and moods. In Hindi such forms have to be learned.

There are ~~however~~ certain areas where certain grammatical features of English have no parallels in Hindi. This eases the burden on the student to some extent. For example in English, common nouns in most cases are indicated as being used in the indefinite or definite sense by the use of the articles 'a' and 'an' or 'the' respectively. A noun in Hindi on the other hand can be used without any such article. In both languages, however, there are demonstrative articles.

Vocabulary: The problem of vocabulary is a complex one since every language has many synonyms and homonyms. In addition a given word may have slightly different maanings depending on the context in which it is used. Therefore, a simple word to word or literal translation from L2 to L1 or vice versa is not useful. A great deal also depends on the degree to which students have mastered the basic grammatical structures and vocabulary of L2 since a high degree of competence here can help the students to guess the meanings of new words, or a particular meaning of a given word which has several meanings. This is one reason why students without adequate mastery of the basic structure and vocabulary of L2 are unable to use a dictionary, since knowing all the translation meanings of a given word in L2 does not tell them which of these many meanings is relevant in the particular sentence or text. Another important aspect of vocabulary in learning L2 is to make sure that the students do not carry over the semantic range of words from L1 to words in L2 which outwardly have the 'same' meaning. Doing this would create problems, since the world view of the speakers of L2 and their semantic classifications and categorizations may be quite different from those of the speakers of L1.

The last but not the least important aspect of language teaching is to make the students aware of the differences and similarities between the cultures of L1 and L2. Otherwise situations arise where students who ~~otherwise~~ are competent in using L2 are ridiculed for using wrong expressions in wrong places and at improper time. Along with the teaching of L2 therefore, the various aspects of the culture, especially those relevant to the linguistic behavior, should be emphasized. Unfortunately, not enough care has been taken in this respect in many Hindi language texts available in this country; we come across situations of the following types in these Hindi texts; offering whisky and soda to guests, whereas long tradition in certain parts of Hindi speaking areas does not approve of the consumption of alcohol; asking the name of listener's wife immediately after the inttial introduction and talking about her in a manner which would not be approved unless the speaker is a census officer; using Hindi words equivalent to 'thank you' quite often, although such expression is generally not used among villagers, town people and uneducated persons; using a Hindi word equivalent to 'please' although a request is differentiated from command simply by gestures, tone of voice and intonation pattern, or a word completely different from that used. Such situations ~~would~~ will not arise if the students are made aware of the cultural differences of L1 and L2 and they learn to understand the culture of the L2 speaking community just as well as L2 itself.

The ideal situation in the teaching of Hindi to American students ~~would~~ should be that: a) a teacher of Hindi is aware of all the likely problems English speakers may face in learning Hindi; b) he has devised some ways of overcoming many of these problems if not all; c) he has a Hindi text which is organized and based on the results of contrastive analysis of Hindi and English, and frequency analysis of Hindi, is graded in terms of degrees of complexity, starting from the simple structures and going on to more difficult ones, and is full of relevant cultural contents. One may perhaps say that this is linguistic Utopia. But if we can at least move in this direction and achieve the first step, namely the awareness of the likely areas where American students may have difficulties in learning Hindi, then our linguistic Utopia is not too far away.